

CIRM approves funding \$32 million to remove hurdles to new stem cell therapies

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Burlingame, Calif., January 27, 2010 -The Governing Board of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, the state stem cell agency created by proposition 71, today approved funding \$32 million to 19 research projects intending to create new tools and technologies that overcome barriers to moving stem cell research into clinical trials.

The 19 awards went to seven not-for-profit and three for-profit institutions. The goal of the awards is to look ahead to the barriers scientists see now, and eliminate them before they can slow the progress toward the clinic.

Examples of barriers tackled by this round of awards include developing new ways of screening for disease-specific cell lines, developing a way of MRI imaging at the single cell level and developing new devices for transplanting cells into the brain. By clearing obstacles now, CIRM advances the efforts of scientists worldwide who are working to develop new stem cell-based therapies.

"These awards are a crucial component of CIRM's commitment to accelerate the development of stem cell-based therapies for people of the world," said Alan Trounson, CIRM president. "CIRM funds all stages of therapy development, from basic research to translational awards, but any of these could be stalled by technological bottlenecks. In funding these innovative tools and technologies, CIRM is removing those barriers before they can delay cures."

The board also decided to fund an Early Translational Award II to Fred Gage at the The Salk Institute for Biological Studies that had been held over from the October board meeting. The \$2,336,404 award includes international collaborators in Germany. The portion of the projects carried out by the collaborator will be funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the science ministry in Germany, which will provide approximately \$600,000 toward the project.

This meeting represented the first chance for the agency's newly appointed board members to weigh in on stem cell funding decisions. Of the board's 29 members, 18 serve a six year term that expired last month. Chairman Robert Klein welcomed back 13 members and introduced the two new members: Kristiina Vuori, M.D., Ph.D., and Bertram Lubin, M.D.

"CIRM board members are asked for an incredible time commitment to advance stem cell research vital to reduce human suffering for chronic diseases from Parkinson's to leukemia to brain cancer and diabetes," Klein said. "To date members have attended 277 governing board and subcommittee meetings that have allocated more than a billion dollars to research projects and attracted approximately one billion dollars in donor and international funding to advance critical stem cell research on chronic disease and injury. This research has already generated important milestones of progress, over 650 discoveries published and clinical trials underway, to fulfill the promise made to California voters through Proposition 71."

The board also approved two proposed funding opportunities:

- **CIRM Visiting Faculty Awards:** These awards will provide stem cell research opportunities for faculty-level scientists from state colleges and other California educational institutions that do not receive major research and infrastructure funding from CIRM. Funding would take the form of supplemental awards to existing CIRM PIs.
- **Support to attend the International Society for Stem Cell Research meeting:** This funding would allow patient advocates, CIRM Bridges trainees and early career scientists to attend the ISSCR meeting. The funding for this program comes from donor contributions to the agency and will not utilize state funds.

Tools and Technologies Awards II

Number	Investigator	Institution	Approved funding level
RT2-01965	J. William Langston	The Parkinson's Institute	\$1,327,983
RT2-01927	Lawrence Goldstein	University of California, San Diego	\$1,816,157

RT2-01920	Richard Gatti	University of California, Los Angeles	\$1,833,054
RT2-02064	Karl Willert	University of California, San Diego	\$1,993,586
RT2-02018	Brian Rutt	Stanford University	\$1,930,608
RT2-02022	David Schaffer	University of California, Berkeley	\$1,493,928
RT2-01906	Ricardo Dolmetsch	Stanford University	\$1,884,808
RT2-02061	Marius Wernig	Stanford University	\$1,906,494
RT2-01975	Daniel Lim	University of California, San Francisco	\$1,831,723
RT2-01880	Michele Calos	Stanford University	\$1,619,627
RT2-02057	Douglas Wagenaar	Gamma Medica-Ideas, Inc.	\$1,528,599
RT2-01893	Steven Conolly	University of California, Berkeley	\$1,452,360
RT2-01889	Shu Chien	University of California, San Diego	\$1,832,515
RT2-01942	Jifan Hu	GMR Epigenetics	\$1,452,693
RT2-02040	Clive Svendsen	Cedars-Sinai Medical Center	\$1,933,022
RT2-02060	Irv Weissman	Stanford University	\$1,869,487*
RT2-01881	Stanley Carmichael	University of California, Los Angeles	\$1,825,613
RT2-02052	Marc Unger	Fluidigm Corporation	\$1,943,904
RT2-01938	Sarah Heilshorn	Stanford University	\$1,415,981*
Total			\$32,892,142

* These awards were approved pending cost adjustments

About CIRM: CIRM was established in November 2004 with the passage of Proposition 71, the California Stem Cell Research and Cures Act. The statewide ballot measure, which provided \$3 billion in funding for stem cell research at California universities and research institutions, was overwhelmingly approved by voters, and called for the establishment of an entity to make grants and provide loans for stem cell research, research facilities, and other vital research opportunities. A list of grants and loans awarded to date may be seen here: <http://www.cirm.ca.gov/for-researchers/researchfunding>

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